

Green Bay Packers

2005 Offensive Report Card

Grades by Bob McGinn

Receivers

ANTONIO CHATMAN

Scores of punts are fumbled each year in the NFL, but in three seasons Chatman hasn't had one (he was charged with one in '04 but it was Robert Ferguson's fault on a reverse). Not big enough to play from scrimmage for a good team but did a decent job moving from a No. 5 at the start to a No. 2 at the end. Dropped just 2 of 86 passes. Poor after the catch but doesn't leave himself open to fumbling, either.

Grade C +

DONALD DRIVER

Without question, the best player on an awful team. Dealt with constant bracketing and safety-over-the-top coverages but still found openings on a consistent basis. The offense would have been kaput without him. Two-thirds, maybe even more of his 86 receptions came inside. Absorbed punishing shots on a routine basis but played through the pain and kept coming back for more. An inspirational figure for his teammates, who voted him as club's nominee for Ed Block Courage Award. Dropped six of 149 passes for lowest drop percentage (4.0%) of career. Also led wideouts in average yards after the catch with 3.71, his second-highest in his four years as a starter. Some scouts still think of him more as a No. 2 than as a No. 1.

Grade A

ROBERT FERGUSON

Probably was even more disappointing this season than he was as a rookie in '01. He'll never get another opportunity as good as this after Javon Walker went down. It's possible that he never will be the same player since the illegal hit by Jacksonville SS Donovan Darius in December 2004 gave him a neck injury and headaches for four months. Whether it was subconscious or not, he seemed less willing to sell out on routes that in the past he would attack. Hasn't made it through a full season since '02 and might not get another chance in Green Bay.

Grade D

ROD GARDNER

Showed a lot in two weeks and should compete for the No. 3 job in '06. Passes the eyeball test the minute he walks in the room. Big, strong wide receiver on a team that needs more size at the position. Has lost some speed during his five seasons with Washington and Carolina but probably still runs 40 yards in the 4.55-second range, which is fast enough. This is one of the few unrestricted free agents that the Packers should really want back.

Grade C

TERRENCE MURPHY

Suffered spinal injury on hit by Carolina S Thomas Davis returning a kickoff in Week 4. It was discovered that he has a narrow spinal canal, making it probably 50-50 that he plays again. Caught five of the 11 passes thrown his way in three games. Missed about two weeks of camp in August, interrupting what had been a fairly impressive training camp. The Packers need answers on his availability long before the draft.

Grade Incomplete

ANDRAE THURMAN

Cut at end of camp and was brought back off Titans' waivers in late October. Ended up playing 10 games, most as a No. 4. Doesn't have the size or speed to make any impact. One thing Thurman will never do is make excuses. Best thing he did was return kickoffs in exhibition games.

Grade D -

JAVON WALKER

Enjoyed a breakout season in '04 but had a lackluster camp and exhibition campaign in August. Suffered torn anterior cruciate knee ligament and meniscus cartilage damage in Week 1 fall at Ford Field and was done for the season. Will be entering just his fifth season but also will be 28 next October. It's critical for him to return at 100%, but that might not be possible until '07.

Grade Incomplete

Tight Ends

BUBBA FRANKS

Endured his worst season as a pro. Hoped to get into camp much earlier but when management dilly-dallied around on contract negotiations he missed four weeks. Battled knee problems all year. Had to sit out three early games and ended up on injured reserve. In 10 games he was responsible for nine "bad" runs, one-half more than he had in 17 games last year. A towering threat in the red zone and a solid possession receiver. Maybe the changes in coaches will motivate him to recapture his old fire.

Grade C -

TORY HUMPHREY

Spent six weeks on the practice squad and one game on the active roster, allowing a sack on a blown assignment. Fine athlete. Too short for tight end; probably will learn how to play fullback this spring in NFL Europe League.

Grade Incomplete

DONALD LEE

Hard to argue with anything he did. Arrived Sept. 6, three days after being cut by Miami. Thrust into prominent role in an offense that he knew nothing about and surprisingly flourished within a short time. Explosive athlete who can block, catch and run. Wasn't responsible for a single "bad" run, a remarkable accomplishment. Also led the team in average yards after catch at 4.46. Dropped too many passes (four of 53) and is on the short side at 6 feet 3 inches.

Grade B -

DAVID MARTIN

Might have played the best ball of his career but also had to miss four games with two different injuries (groin, concussion). Thus, there has to be considerable skepticism among the team's decision-makers on whether Martin will ever be anything more than a perennial tease. Sure, he can run, he can catch and his blocking isn't bad (7 ½ "bad" runs). But most No. 2 tight ends are tough guys. Martin isn't.

Grade D+

Offensive Lineman

KEVIN BARRY

Probably earned himself a substantial chunk of change with his brutish blocking down the stretch both in the "U-71" package and as a conventional tight end. If Barry could learn the plays at tight end, it stands to reason he could have learned the plays at guard. Thus, he will become an unrestricted free agent in March with the Packers not having seen him start a game since the end of the '02 season. Barry needs motivating and off-season nagging. However, his ability to demolish defenders as a run blocker made him unique on this roster over the last four years. This would be a hard player just to kiss goodbye.

Grade C +

CHAD CLIFTON

This might have been his poorest season. Tied for the club lead in sacks allowed with 3 ½ after yielding just five in the last three seasons and was responsible for 12 ½ "bad" runs, more than double his total of six in '04. Also had 10 penalties, most on the team. Part of the problem was the departure of LG Mike Wahle, a quicker-minded student of the game who often helped Clifton make pre-snap adjustments. Clifton has Pro Bowl ability as a pass blocker and showed that he could be a formidable run blocker in '04. The new coach needs Clifton to regain his focus.

Grade C +

JUNIUS COSTON

Played three snaps at LT in the rout of New Orleans, messed up on one or two of the plays and never got another chance. A fifth-round draft choice from the Division I-AA ranks with a ton of talent. Will get every chance to start at either guard in '06.

Grade Incomplete

MIKE FLANAGAN

Might be out of gas physically at age 33. His medical résumé includes a horrific leg injury in the 1990s, patellar surgery in Oct 2004 and sports-hernia surgery Oct. 7. Deserved accolades for making it back in record time and fighting through what at times was intense pain to start final 10 games. If healthy, he's still an adequate starter here or elsewhere. But attrition has robbed him of some quickness and strength that he could ill afford to lose.

Grade D +

ADRIAN KLEMM

Not a lot different from Wahle in terms of height, weight and speed but possessed almost none of his toughness, awareness and functional athletic ability. Too soft and unsure of himself both in protection and as an in-line run blocker. Inconsistent and ineffective on the move. The Patriots haven't made many drafting mistakes in the last six years, but taking Klemm with a 2nd-round pick in 2000 probably ranks at top of the list. You don't need to pay \$800,000 signing bonuses when players like this are available on the street.

Grade F

GREY RUEGAMER

Didn't play much but when he did the results weren't good. An all-time battler who goes for the throat every chance he gets but isn't athletic enough to make plays. Exposed in pair of starts against the Bears. Turns 30 in June but still should have a job somewhere as a backup center.

Grade D -

MARK TAUSCHER

A consummate pro who plays about the same every year. His number of "pressures" (defined as number of sacks, knockdowns and hurries) was up a little bit (14 ½) but his number of "bad" run blocks was down a little bit (7 ½). Not as talented as Clifton but played better this year on the basis of consistency. A loyal, committed and very good player.

Grade B

CHRIS WHITE

Rookie free agent played mostly left tackle at Southern Mississippi but has to be a center. If Flanagan departs, look for him and Wells to battle it out for the starting job. Smart, industrious and light on his feet. Was one of the biggest surprises in training camp.

Grade Incomplete

SCOTT WELLS

Klemm's collapse forced Wells to start the last eight games at left guard, where the club found out that he has to be a center. At guard, it's too easy for behemoths to match up against Wells and go right over the top. Wells' overall strength and flat-footed style of blocking are impressive, but there's a limit at his size on just how much force he can withstand. Was second on the club in number of "pressures" allowed with 22 ½ despite starting just 10 games. Still makes a surprising number of mistakes.

Grade D

WILL WHITTICKER

Overmatched from the get-go. He is massive and, on occasion, was able to use bulk to engulf defenders. But body size at times was his worst enemy. He had a tendency to play high, which leads to all kinds of problems. He's a slower reactor without quick-twitch movement ability. He was forever late getting out on linebackers and labored badly in the open field. He led the team in "pressures" allowed with 30 ½, most by any Packer from 1999-2005, and tied for the team lead in "bad" runs with 12 ½. The lumbering Whitticker was so bad on occasion that it must have been painful for the coaches to watch. He did try hard. If he did improve, it was marginally.

Grade F

Quarterbacks

BRETT FAVRE

Time after time, he missed open receivers downfield on the type of throws that other quarterbacks complete to win games. That was damaging to an offense that had little margin for error once injuries really struck in mid-October. What hurt even more were the 29 interceptions, including 21 in the last 10 games when his passer rating was an abominable 58.0. In three games before that, his rating was 113.9. Favre still has his fastball. He still moves well enough. He still can lead a team and captivate a crowd. Accuracy and reactions, in additions to decision-making, were his shortcomings in his 15th season. The reasons why he wouldn't return would be if he really doubts his ability, doesn't like the new coach and system, or thinks the team is beyond immediate hope. Rather than rue the departure of Mike Sherman, Favre easily could be energized by a new challenge. If he does play, the next staff cannot permit Favre to undermine things with his hope-and-prayer mentality.

Grade C +

CRAIG NALL

Unrestricted free agent who would like a chance to play and could get it if Favre quits. Was a more effective player than Aaron Rodgers at the end of camp but lost out on the No. 2 job mainly for political reasons. A tough guy and a smart guy. Just might not have enough ability.

Grade Incomplete

AARON RODGERS

Had chances to impress in the intrasquad scrimmage, four exhibition games and the fourth quarter against the Ravens. He struggled in the scrimmage, led one scoring drive in 20 full possessions in exhibitions and posted a 36.8 passer rating in Baltimore to go with two fumbles. GM Ted Thompson likes Rodgers' potential, but no one knows at this point if he'll be a starter or a bust. The Packers' future is tied to him.

Grade Incomplete

Running Backs

NAJEH DAVENPORT

Coming off ankle surgery, will be unrestricted in March and probably won't return unless it's for one-year at minimum salary. Big back with so-so speed and below-average receiving skills. Can't stay on the field and doesn't see himself as a fullback.

Grade D

TONY FISHER

Injuries forced him to play an average of 30.7 snaps per game, 10 more than in '04 and obviously too much for a player of his limited ability. He can contribute as a receiver, pass blocker and on special teams. However, in the second half of the season, it almost looked as if he had become a step slower. There are worse No. 3 running backs. . . and some better.

Grade D +

SAMKON GADO

Easily the best story from a bad year. Led the team in rushing (582), yards per carry (4.07), 100-yard games (3) and long rush (64) in just eight games, including seven as the primary ball carrier. Eager, humble Nigerian flashed speed, hands, toughness, a good brain and more elusiveness than it appeared early on. Fumbled four times in first 90 touches but learned from his coaches, held the ball higher and tighter to his chest and didn't have any in his last 63. Suffered a torn medial collateral knee ligament in Week 14 but would have been ready this weekend. In position to battle for No. 1 job in '06.

Grade B -

AHMAN GREEN

Underwent surgery Oct. 25 to repair a quadriceps that had nagged him for years and finally ruptured in Week 6. It's a tough injury for anyone, not to mention a running back who turns 29 next month and has 2,111 regular-season and post-season touches under his belt. But Green has rehabilitated faster than expected and should be ready in '06.

Depending on the new coach, Green could be back as the starter if he's willing to take a one-year incentive-laden deal with an eye for the future. Operating essentially behind the same blocking as Gado, Green averaged a career-low 3.31. He wasn't finishing runs or breaking tackles like the old Green. Whether he can regain his Pro Bowl form is anyone's guess.

Grade C-

NOAH HERRON

Played 73 snaps in the final three games after injuries ended Gado's season. Shows shiftiness, smarts and savvy but has serious limitations in size, speed and athletic ability. His 31-inch vertical jump was the poorest by any running back at the combine last February. Worth another look.

Grade D

CHAZ WILLIAMS

Rookie free agent who suffered a broken ankle on the seventh day of camp and underwent season-ending surgery. Future is uncertain.

Grade Incomplete

Fullbacks

WILLIAM HENDERSON

He plays less and less every year from scrimmage while maintaining a prominent role on special teams as tough guy and mentor. One reason for the decline in the run game has been his declining lead blocking. He demonstrated time and again that he no longer is capable of rooting out linebackers. Over the years, however, he has developed into a top-caliber receiver even though he has lost some flexibility and speed. He hasn't dropped a ball in two years and usually leaps over the first tackler or makes him miss. Henderson, who turns 35 next month, wants to play several more years and probably will.

Grade C

VONTA LEACH

Averaged 16.8 snaps per game, 2.4 fewer than Henderson. Generally speaking, the Packers ran with him in the lineup and passed with Henderson. Considers himself a physical football player and does everything in his power to be one. Somewhat of an enforcer but still was responsible for 6 ½ "bad" runs, one fewer than Henderson. Stiff in the upper body and doesn't turn back well for passes. Needs extensive development as receiver to become starter.

Grade D+